

HR Corner

Company DNA the blueprint for development by Charles Mak



Catherine Lim
regional human
resources director
The Pure Group
Photo: Nolly Leung

Leading healthy lifestyle group helps staff enhance physical and mental agility

People management encompasses a wide range of policies and practices covering recruitment, training, retention and succession planning. Among these, training remains instrumentally vital: it helps attract potential recruits, retain existing talent and build tomorrow's leaders, with the ultimate aim of increasing a company's business capability.

"Employers must adopt people management practice strategically by aligning it with any recruitment initiatives," notes Catherine Lim, regional human resources director, The Pure Group.

Healthy lifestyle leader with both fitness and yoga centres around town, The Pure Group currently employs about 500 staff in various functions including back office, customer service, sales and professional yoga teachers and fitness trainers. Ms Lim underscores the significance of assessing a candidate's potential for growth during employment interviews. "People

development is not only about offering staff the right training; it has a great deal to do with the person's growth potential and aspirations," she says, adding that the individual's ability to integrate into the company's culture is also essential, alongside work experience and educational background.

Once on board, staff at all levels are placed on a systematic training and development scheme linked to a performance management system under which performance reviews are carried out monthly for sales staff, quarterly for personal trainers and biannually for general staff.

Shaping up

Personal trainers at the Pure Group must possess the NASM (National Academy of Sports Medicine) qualification, and are required to renew it annually, literally on the company's account. "Staff take the initiative to upgrade their skills and knowledge and it is the company's responsibility to absorb the necessary fees," Ms Lim stresses.

She notes that professionals who enter a specific stream such as yoga, and demonstrate the required skills can expect higher incentives. "Yoga teachers must give quality," Ms Lim says. "As such, we bring in world-renowned yoga masters to organise workshops and intensive quarterly training sessions for them."

Meanwhile, all frontline staff undergo basic customer service training during their initial three months on the job. "New recruits may not yet have the full set of requisite skills," Ms Lim says. "Since we have our own niches and a unique position in the market, they must learn early on about the Pure DNA — passion, positive attitude, honesty and team work." During the following nine months they are given advanced customer service training which comprises group activities and role-play. As they progress, third-tier training in customer relations follows. "The purpose of this higher level training is to find out if staff have what it takes to become managers," she says. Further along the line, staff who demonstrate the necessary competence are handpicked for one-on-one training as part of the company's succession plan.

Ms Lim remarks that training requiring physical presence remains a viable option which contrasts with the growing trend in e-learning. "The bulk of our operations entails face-to-face customer interaction and the process involves a high level of skills, creativity, flexibility and personal charisma. These are some of the essentials web-based training cannot teach," she says.

Keeping ahead of the game, the Pure Group is quick to respond to market trends and its training mirrors this market sensitivity. For instance, to help busy executives maintain a fitness regimen even when they're travelling, Pure Fitness recently launched TRX training which comprises some 400 exercises with just a simple and portable tool.

According to Ms Lim, customer feedback and revenue can reflect training results. "We also welcome feedback and comments from staff," she adds. "However, these are not the only yardsticks. A mystery shopper programme is in place to further gauge the effectiveness of our training policies. We also encourage trainers to benchmark their skill levels with colleagues and their professional counterparts."

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Career roadmap

In light of the Pure Group's service-oriented business portfolio and the fierce competition for talent currently in the employment market, the company makes it a priority to develop its in-house talents. In particular, a competency roadmap will be drawn up this year to better identify the competency level as well as hard and soft skills of individual members of staff. "This roadmap is aligned with their career developments. The objective is to ensure a sufficient supply of talent meets our expansion needs," Ms Lim explains.

Aside from vertical development, opportunities for lateral development also exist within the company. "If certain members of staff decide on a career shift and express an interest in a different function, they can apply for internal transfer and we help them confirm their career aspirations and stretch their potential to the full," Ms Lim emphasises. "If such moves involve additional training, or for example, examinations to qualify as personal trainers, aspirants can expect full support from the company."

Salient points

- Growing in-house talent a priority
- Customer service training a cornerstone
- Competency roadmap identifies and confirms aspirations
- Career developments encouraged and supported

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